

SANDYMOUNT EXPLORERS

From Nazareth to Nicaea (2): The Fourth Gospel

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Sequence

1. Late document
2. A gospel of “quest” stories
3. The “I am” sayings
4. The Prologue: history and evolution
5. Backgrounds
6. Jesus, the Word made flesh, fully human, fully divine
7. Conversation

1. Late document

- C. AD 95
- Earliest known (fairly) complete copy: Papyrus 66
- Fruit of a long gestation (prayer, catechesis, writing)
- Evidence of editing (especially apparent in the Prologue)
- Profound teaching about Jesus.

2. A Gospel of “quest” stories

- Nicodemus
- The Woman at the Well
- The Man Born Blind
- Mary Magdalen
- “Doubting” Thomas

John 20:24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

John 20:26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was

with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” 28 Thomas answered him, “**My Lord and my God!**” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

3. The “I am” sayings

(1) Bread of life

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 6:41 Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”

John 6:48 I am the bread of life.

John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

(2) Light of the world

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

(3) The gate

John 10:7 So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.”

John 10:9 “I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture.”

(4) The Good Shepherd

John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

John 10:14 I am the good shepherd.

(5) The Resurrection and the Life

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

(6) The Way, the Truth and the Life

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

(7) The True Vine

John 15:1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.”

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

Behind the “I am” sayings stands the name of God: YHWH.

Exodus 3:13 But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

15 God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

This is my name forever,
and this my title for all generations.

Hebrew:	Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh	– “I am who I am.”
Greek:	Egō eimi ho ōn	– “I am The One Who Is.”

Latin: ego sum qui sum – I am who I am
 Luther: Ich werde sein, der ich sein werde.

LXX Isaiah 43:25 **I am I am**
 the one who blots out your acts of lawlessness,
 and I will not remember them at all.

LXX Isaiah 45:19 I have not spoken in secret
 nor in a dark place of the earth;
 I did not say to the offspring of Jakob,
 “Seek a vain thing.”
I am I am the Lord,
 speaking righteousness
 and declaring truth.

LXX Isaiah 51:12 **I am I am** he who comforts you.
 Acknowledge of whom you were cautious;
 you were afraid because of a mortal man
 and a son of man, who have dried up like grass.

4. The Prologue: history and evolution

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

John 1:6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’”) 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

Behind it may lie an earlier Christian hymn to Wisdom, as follows:

1 In the beginning was Wisdom
 and Wisdom was with God
 and God (divine) was Wisdom

- 2 The same (She) was in the beginning with God
 3a All things through her became
 4 What became in her was life
 And the life was the light of men
 5 And the light in the darkness shines
 And the darkness did not extinguish it
 10 In the world she was
 and the world through her became
 And the world did not know her.
 11 Unto her own she came,
 And her own did not receive her
 12a But as many as received her,
 12b She gave them authority children of God to become
 14a/b And Wisdom camped among us
 14c And we beheld her glory

Modifications can be detected as follows:

1 In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things came into being through him, and **without him not one thing came into being.** What has come into being **4** in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. **8** He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. **12** But to all who received him, **who believed in his name**, he gave power to become children of God, **13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.** **14** And the **Word** became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, **the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.**

15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'")

16 *From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*

17 *The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

18 **No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.**

Evangelist's Additions / Modifications

Negatively:

- Opposition to Torah / Wisdom ideology
- Opposition a defective wisdom Christology
- Loss: feminine imagery of God

Positively:

- Creation and new creation
- Logos/Word - transcendence and wisdom
- Prophecy - Jesus was a prophet
- Gospel ("the word")
- Jesus - God's presence and revelation
- Dialogue with the culture (Judaism / Stoicism)

Behind the text

- The story of creation in **Genesis 1**, somehow perfect and completed.
- The narrative of the **Exodus**, the giving of the Law and the figure of Moses. Partially in fulfilment of; partially in contrast with.
- The figure of “**Lady Wisdom**”. The key texts are: Job 28; Proverbs 1, 8, 9; Baruch 3:9-4:4; Sirach 24; Wis 7:7-9:18.
- The logos in **Jewish Wisdom** literature and in **Philo of Alexandria**.
- The **logos philosophy of Stoicism**, with its monotheism and pantheism.
- What John means by logos is clarified in v. 17.

5. Backgrounds

Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8

Proverbs 8:22 “The LORD created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.

- 23 Ages ago I was set up,
 at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
- 24 When there were no depths I was brought forth,
 when there were no springs abounding with water.
- 25 Before the mountains had been shaped,
 before the hills, I was brought forth,
- 26 when he had not yet made earth and fields
 or the world’s first bits of soil.
- 27 When he established the heavens, I was there;
 when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
- 28 when he made firm the skies above,
 when he established the fountains of the deep,
- 29 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
 so that the waters might not transgress his command,
 when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
- 30 then I was beside him, like a master worker,
 and I was daily his delight,
 playing before him always,
- 31 playing in his inhabited world
 and delighting in the human race.

The figure of Wisdom in Baruch

- Baruch 3:36 This is our God;
no other can be compared to him.
- 37 He found the whole way to knowledge
 and gave her to his servant Jacob
 and to Israel, whom he loved.
- 38 Afterward she appeared on earth
 and lived with humankind.
- Baruch 4:1 She is the book of the commandments of God,
the law that endures forever.
All who hold her fast will live,
and those who forsake her will die.

Lady Wisdom in the Book of Sirach

Sirach 24:8 “Then the Creator of all things gave me a command,
and my Creator pitched my tent.

He said, ‘Encamp in Jacob,
and in Israel receive your inheritance.’

9 Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me,
and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.

10 In the holy tent I ministered before him,
and so I was established in Zion.

11 Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place,
and in Jerusalem was my domain.

12 I took root in an honoured people;
in the portion of the Lord is my inheritance.

Wisdom in the Book of Wisdom

Wisdom 7:21 I learned both what is secret and what is manifest,

22a for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me.

22b There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy,
unique, manifold, subtle,
agile, clear, unpolluted,
distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen,

23 irresistible, beneficent, humane,
steadfast, sure, free from anxiety,
all-powerful, overseeing all,
and penetrating through all spirits
that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle.

24 For wisdom is more mobile than any motion;
because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things.

25 For she is a **breath** of the power of God
and a pure **emanation** of the glory of the Almighty;
therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her.

26 For she is a **reflection** of eternal light,
a spotless **mirror** of the working of God,
and an **image** of his goodness.

27 Although she is but one, she can do all things,
and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;
in every generation she passes into holy souls
and makes them friends of God and prophets,

28 for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.

29 She is more beautiful than the sun
and excels every constellation of the stars.

Compared with the light she is found to be more radiant,

30 for it is succeeded by the night,
but against wisdom evil does not prevail.

Wisdom 8:1 She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other,
and she orders all things well.

6. Jesus the Word made flesh, fully human, full divine

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 Kai ho logos sarx egeneto kai eskēnōsen en hēmin, kai etheasametha tēn doxan autou, doxan hōs monogenous para patros, plērēs charitos kai alētheias.

Function in the light of the Gospel

- New creation across the Gospel - esp. cross and resurrection
- Life - Lazarus story - I am the Resurrection and the Life
- Light - Blind man - I am the Light of the world
- Baptist - important early on the Gospel - Jn vocabulary
- Not know him - the rejection by most Jews - passim
- Children and being born - Nicodemus
- Flesh - cf. Thomas and Tiberias
- Glory - throughout
- Father's only Son - chs. 13-17
- Truth - Pilate and often elsewhere; I am the truth
- "He was before me" - Before Abraham was, I AM
- Made him known - revealed through actions and speech

And so...

- A fabulous Prologue to the whole Gospel.
- The Prologue possibly (only) had itself a pre-history.
- As it stands, it spoke to Israelite, Jewish and Stoic traditions.
- It prepared the Johannine community members to read the Gospel.
- It offered radical, breath-taking teaching on the identity of Jesus.
- A direct inspiration for the deliberations at Nicaea.

7. Conversation